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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS DIA, SECDEF, USCINCEUR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
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SUBJECT: THE ASSASSINATION OF BRIG. RAZZUQ

1. SUMMARY: ASSASSINATION OF BRIG. ABD AL-KARIM RAZZUQ JUNE
18 HAS CREATED SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL STIR WITHIN SYRIA. WHILE
ASSASSINS HAVE NOT BEEN ARRESTED, DAMASCENES HAVE SPECULATED
AT LENGTH WHETHER THEY IRAQI AGENTS, MUSLIM BRETHERN,
RELATIVES OF TWO HAMAWITES RECENTLY HANGED WHO PERPETRATED
SYMBOLIC ACT AGAINST REGIME TO ACQUIT FAMILY HONOR, OR
SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 148753

ALAWITES ENGAGED IN INTRA-SECTARIAN FEUDING, EVEN BEFORE
THE INCIDENT, DAMASCUS SUNNIS WERE DISCUSSING PERCEIVED
FACTIONALISM BETWEEN PRO-ASSAD ALAWRTES AND RIVAL SYMPATHIZERS
OF LATE MAJ. GEN. MUHAMMAD UMRANF; THERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT
RIVALRIES BOTH WITHIN ALAWITE COMMUNITY AND BETWEEN
ALAWITES AND SUNNIS MAY BE INCREASING WITHIN CONTEXT OF
ISSUES WHICH HAVE ACCUMULATED SINCE EARLY 1976 -- LEBANON,
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, CORRUPTION, SECTARIANISM AND INTERNAL
SECURITY. JUDGING FROM ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATIONS IN PAST
FEW MONTHS, AL-ASSAD'S OPPONENTS ARE ORGANIZED, POLITICALLY
SOPHISTICATED AND ABLE TO MOUNT THEIR OPERATIONS WITH

RELATIVE IMPUNITY. BUT THEY ARE APPARENTLY
TOO FEW IN NUMBER
TO ENGAGE IN ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITIES BEYOND SELECTIVE
ASSASSINATION. THE INCIDENTS HAVE GENERATED AN AIR OF
EXPECTATION IN DAMASCUS THAT MORE INCIDENTS WILL BE FORTH-
COMING. THE OUTER BREACHES OF THE REGIMEERS DEFENSES MAY
HAVE BEEN PENETRATED, BUT AL-ASSAD REMAINS IN CONTROL OF THE
ARMY AND SECURITY APPARATUS, HAS RECEIVED FRESH INFUSIONS
OF SAUDI ASSISTANCE AND APPEARS DETERMINED TO PULL HIS REGIME
THROUGH ITS CURRENT DIFFICULTIES.END SUMMARY.

2. THE ASSASSINATION OF BRIG. ABD AL-KARIM RAZZUQ AFTERNNON
OF JUNE 18 HAS CREATED A MAJOR POLITICAL STIR IN SYRIA,
AND HAS GENERATED A SENSE OF EXPECTATION THAT MORE SUCH
INCIDENTS WILL OCCUR. RAZZUQ'S ASSASSINATION HAS BEEN THE
PRIMARY TOPIC OF CONVERSATION AMONG DAMASCENES THE PAST
FEW DAYS; VARIOUS VERSIONS OF THE KILLING HAVE SPREAD, AND
DETAILS ARE BEING SIFTED FOR CLUES TO ITS POLITICAL
IMPLICATIONS.

3. THE ASSASSINATION.

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 148753

ALL SOURCES GENERALLY AGREE THAT RAZZUQ WAS MURDERED
ABOUT 1500L JUNE 18 OUTSIDE HIS HOME IN MEZZE. ACCOUNTS
OF THE MURDER DIFFER IN NUMBER OF ASSASSINS -- FROM

ONE TO THREE -- WHETHER HE WAS MURDERED BY GUN OR KNIFE
(MOST BELIEVE FORMER), AND HOW MANY BULLETS HE RECEIVED
(FIGURE VARIES FROM ONE TO 30.)

4. THE SARG RESPONSE.

MASSIVE FUNERAL PROCESSION MOVED THROUGH DAMASCUS JUNE 19
ACCOMPANYING RAZZUQ'S BODY ON WAY TO CEMETARY, BUT AS OF
JUNE 25, SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE NOT REFERRED TO ASSASSINATION.
SECURITY AUTHORITIES INITIALLY DETAINED PEOPLE FROM
RAZZUQ'S NEIGHBORHOOD FOR QUESTIONING. EMBOFF WAS TOLD
JUNE 22 BY OFFICERS FROM MININTERIOR CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION
DIVISION THAT CID HAS ALL ITS MANPOWER INVESTIGATING THE
CASE, AND ALSO THAT SARG OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN WARNED TO BE
MORE DISCREET IN THEIR MOVEMENTS. LOCAL LAWYER ASSERTED JUNE 22
THAT FOUR MEN SUSPECTED OF MURDERING RAZZUQ HAD BEEN
DETAINED.

5. THE EGYPTIAN REACTION.

WITHIN TWO-THREE HOURS OF INCIDENT, NEWS ABOUT IT HAD
SPREAD AMONG DAMASCENES. EGYPTIAN PRESS ACCOUNT OF KILLING,
CITED BY ISRAELI AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL MEDIA JUNE 19,
TRANSMITTED NEWS TO ALL PARTS OF SYRIA. ACCORDING TO

AL-BAATH SOURCE, EGYPTIAN PRESS DELEGATION WAS MEETING WITH SANA DIRECTOR SABIR FALHUT AFTERNOON JUNE 19 WHEN FALHUT RECEIVED PHONE CALL REPORTING THE MURDER. FALHUT PASSED ALONG INITIAL DETAILS, WHICH DELEGATION THEN RELAYED TO CAIRO. IN VIEW OF MFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR SHOUFFI, EGYPTIAN MEDIA PUBLICITY ACCORDED TO RAZZUQ'S MURDER IS A SIGN THAT SYRO-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS ARE STILL MARKED BY UNDERLYING TENSIONS TO EXTENT THAT EGYPTIANS

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 148753

WASTED NO TIME IN PUBLISHING NEWS THAT GOE REALIZED WOULD EMBARRASS DAMASCUS REGIME.

6. OMENS ACCOMPANYING THE ASSASSINATION.

ACCORDING TO SHOUFFI, BODIES OF TWO MEN FROM HAMA SENTENCED BY SUPREME STATE SECURITY COURT TO DEATH FOR THEIR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN ASSASSINATION OF DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY RECTOR DR. MUHAMMAD AL-FADIL HAVE BEEN STOLEN FROM THEIR GRAVES. SHOUFFI BELIEVES THEY WERE INNOCENT OF CRIME FOR WHICH THEY EXECUTED, AND SAID SOME ASCRIBE RAZZUQ'S MURDER TO VENGEFUL MEMBERS OF TWO VICTIMS' HAMA CLAN. LOCAL AP STRINGER CLAIMED THAT OFFICER IN SYRIAN COUNTERINTELLIGENCE WAS MURDERED BY PISTOL WITH SILENCER EVENING JUNE 3 IN DAMASCUS; NOTING THAT RAZZUQ APPARENTLY KILLED WITH SIMILAR WEAPON, HE SUGGESTED PROBABILITY THAT BOTH THESE MURDERS WERE PLANNED BY IRAQIS. ONCE SOURCE HAS ALSO TOLD US THAT ALAWITE OFFICER IN HAMA WAS KILLED AFTER RAZZUQ INCIDENT. WE CANNOT CONFIRM EITHER OF THESE KILLINGS, BUT THE STORIES SEEM TO BE SPREADING.

7. WHO WAS RAZZUQ?

AS BEST WE CAN ASCERTAIN BRIG. ABD AL-KARIM RAZZUQ WAS A COMMANDER OF SYRIA'S MISSILE DEFENSES, A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER WITH NATURAL LEADERSHIP ABILITIES, AND AN ALAWITE. ACCORDING TO AL-BAATH SOURCE, RAZZUQ WAS "A LEADER OF MEN," AND "POTENTIAL CHIEF OF STAFF" IN CASE OF A CHANGE OF REGIMES. FORMER DAMASCUS CHIEF OF POLICE TOLD DATT THAT RAZZUQ HEADED A BAATH PARTY ORGANIZATION IN THE PARTY'S MILITARY STRUCTURE. WE HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT RAZZUQ WAS A MEMBER OF THE KHAYYATUN TRIBE (THE TRIBE OF

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 148753

LATE MAJ. GEN. MUHAMMAD UMRAN AND R. AL-FADIL). WELL-INFORMED BUSINESSMAN TOLD CHARGE THAT RAZZUQ WAS PLAYING KEY ROLE IN CHOOSING SUCCESSOR TO DR. AL-FADIL AS HEAD OF ALAWITE TRIBAL COUNCIL. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, RAZZUQ HAD RECENTLY DECIDED TO SUPPORT CANDIDATE FOR POSITION AS HEAD OF TRIBAL COUNCIL WHO WAS NOT FAVORED BY PRES. AL-ASSAD.

THIS SOURCE ADDED THAT RAZZUQ WAS IN TOUCH WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF HADDADUN TRIBE (NOTE: FORMER STRONGMAN SALAL JADID IS PERHAPS MOST PROMINENT POLICIAL FIGURE BELONGING TO HADDADUN).

8. WHO KILLED RAZZUQ?

IT IS NOT CLEAR WHO PERPETRATED LATEST INCIDENT. SOME SUSPICION WILL NATURALLY FALL UPON IRAQIS, BUT REGIME ITSELF HAS NOT RENEWED ITS PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST BAGHDAD. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, OUR CONTACTS DISCOUNT THIS THEORY. POSSIBILITY THAT MURDER MOTIVATED BY FEELINGS OF VENGEANCE IN RESPONSE TO EXECUTION OF TWO HAMAWITES CANNOT BE ENTIRELY DISCOUNTED. LACK OF GUARD AT RAZZUQ'S RESIDENCE, HOWEVER, MEANS THAT HE WAS A RELATIVELY EASY TARGET FOR GROUP TRYING TO MAKE A POLITICAL POINT AT EXPENSE OF AL-ASSAD REGIME. SOVIET MILITARY ATTACHE TOLD DATT ON JUNE 20 THAT HE THOUGHT MUSLIMBRETHERN BEST GUESS. REGUALR SOURCE ALSO REPORTED HE TOLD BY VETERAN (CHRISTIAN) BAATHIST DEPUTY MINISTER THAT ALAWITES WILL NO LONGER TOLERATE CONTINUED MURDERS OF THEIR CO-RELIGIONISTS BY BROTHERHOOD, IMPLYING HE BELIEVED FANATIC MUSLIMS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR CRIME. BUSINESSMAN CITED ABOVE ATTRIBUTED IT TO INTRA-ALAWITE TENSIONS.

9. SECTARIAN STRUGGLE FOR POWER?

MANY OF OUR SOURCES ARE FOCUSING ON LATTER POSSIBILITY, THAT ALAWITES ARE INVOLVED IN INTERNAL FEUDING. THIS THEORY HAD GAINED SOME MOMENTUM EVEN PRIOR TO RAZZUQ'S DEATH.

SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 148753

FOR EXAMPLE, WEST EUROPEAN EMBOFF REPORTED TWO SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH LOCAL SUNNIS CONCERNING ALAWITE TRIAL TENSIONS. SYRIAN ARCHEOLOGIST CITING "FRIENDS IN THE ARMY" AS HIS SOURCE, ASSERTED THAT ARMY IS SPLIT IN TWO; ANTI-ASSAD FACTION IN MILITARY IS ORGANIZED AND WAITING FOR OPPORTUNE MOMENT TO MOVE AGAINST REGIME; ALAWITES ARE FIGHTING AMONG THEMSELVES; RESOLUTION OF THIS STRUGGLE IS GOING TO BE VERY BLOODY. IN SECOND CONVERSATION SYRIAN MEDIA OFFICIAL TOLD SAME EMBOFF THAT ALAWPTES ARE DIVIDED AND AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER; THERE IS GROUP OF "UMRAN OFFICERS" OPPOSED TO REGIME; SPECIAL FORCES COMMANDER ALI HAYDAR AND GROUP OF FELLOW OFFICERS HAVE STIMULATED EDITORIALS BY ALI SULAYMAN IN AL-THAWRAH CRITICIZING INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES AS PART OF ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE POSITION OF RIF'AT AL-ASSAD; BUT THERE WILL NOT BE A COUP, BECAUSE PRES. AL-ASSAD REMAINS STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND PRESSURES FROM ALLIANCE OF SUNNI AND ALAWITE "UMRAN OFFICERS."

10. ONE AL-BAATH SOURCE, WHO IS SUNNI, TOLD US HE HAD

MADE "SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY" OF LAST THREE MAJOR ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATIONS -- AL-FADIL, PROFESSOR ALI BADDUR OF ALEPPO (REPORTEDLY A MEMBER OF THE ALAWITE TRIBAL COUNCIL AND SURVIVOR OF ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT) AND RAZZUQ -- AND FOUNFAZHEM LINKED IN A PATTERN. HE CLAIMED ALL THREE MAINTAINED LEADING POSITIONS IN THEIR SECT AND HAD POTENTIAL TO ASSUME GREATER POSITIONS OF POWER IN SARG. HE CONCLUDED THAT AL-ASSAD REGIME WAS INVOLVED IN POWER STRUGGLE WITH ALAWITE OPPONENTS AND HAD PLANNED SOME OF THE ASSASSINATIONS. SUNNI LAWYER ALSO ANALYZED ASSASSINATION AS RESULT OF ALAWITE SQUABBLING, AND REFERRED TO EXISTENCE OF "UMRAN OFFICERS" GROUP. SHOEFI ON JUNE 22 CONFIRMED THAT STORY OF RZZUQ DEATH BEING CAUSED BY INTRA-ALAWITE

SECRET

PAGE 07 STATE 148753

FEUDING WAS WIDESPREAD IN DAMASCUS, BUT HE SAID HE WAS AS YET UNABLE TO ASCERTAIN WHO WAS BEHIND MURDER.

11. WE ARE STRUCK BY THE FACT THAT SENSITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT EXISTENCE OF RIVAL FACTIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY, PARTICULARLY THE "UMRAN OFFICER" GROUP, IS RECEIVING SUCH WIDESPREAD DISSEMINATION AMONG DAMASCENES. THIS HAD NOT BEEN THE CASE IN OUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE. THERE IS FAIR DEGREE OF ACCURACY IN THESE PERCEPTIONS -- ALTHOUGH PERHAPS SOME WISHFUL THINKING ON PART OF SUNNIS -- AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY NOTED IN REPORTING ON "UMRAN OFFICERS" FACTION. GROUP LED BY COL. ALI HAYDAR IS ALSO INVOLVED IN INTERNAL ALAWITE POLITICKING. SHOEFI TOLD US SHORT WHILE AGO, PRIOR TO RAZZUQ MURDER, THAT ALI HAYDAR, ALI UMRAN AND THIRD OFFICER COMPOSED FACTION WHICH WAS CONTEMPLATING MOVE AGAINST REGIME. ACCORDING TO SHOEFI, THEY WERE RELUCTANT TO ACT BECAUSE: A) THEY FEAR THE SUNNIS OF HAMA WOULD ERUPT AGAINST THE ALAWITES IF AL-ASSAD'S OPPONENTS INITIATED OPEN INTRA-SECTARIAN CONFLICT, AND B) THEY ARE INTIMIDATED BY AL-ASSAD'S MULTIPLICITY OF FOREIGN CONTACTS AND BELIEVE THEY STAND LITTLE CHANCE OF DEPOSING HIM UNLESS THEY CAN OBTAIN FOREIGN BACKING.

12. CONCLUSION.

DESPITE MANY "PET THEORIES," NO CONSENSUS HAS AS YET EMERGED AS TO WHO KILLED RAZZUQ. HIS ASSASSINATION, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO US TO BE FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT THE REGIME CONFRONTS A SMALL NUMBER OF WELL-ORGANIZED OPPONENTS, EITHER WITHIN ALAWITE SECT OR AMONG NON-ALAWITES. EVEN IF SPECULATION

THAT REGIME PLANNED RAZZUQ'S ASSASSINATION IS ACCURATE, IT INDICATES AL-ASSAD HAD DECIDED TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE TO CURB HIS OPPONENTS' POWER, AND WOULD CONSTITUTE AN INDIRECT ATTESTATION OF HIS RESPECT FOR THEIR POTENTIAL CAPABILITY TO CAUSE HIM SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEMS. IF MURDER WAS NOT PLANNED BY REGIME, IT INDICATES THAT

SECRET

PAGE 08 STATE 148753

HIS OPPONENTS ARE NOT ONLY WELL-ORGANIZED BUHUARE KEYING THEIR ACTIONS TO A POLITICAL STRATEGY. NOT ONLY DO THE ASSASSINATIONS CAUSE CONFUSION ON PART OF MANY IN REGIME, BUT THEY GENERATE EXPECTATIONS THAT MORE INCIDENTS WILL TAW PLACE. THIS SENSE OF EXPECSTPMN, NOTED BY SHOUFFI, HAD PRECEDED EPFRY PREVIOUS COUP IN SYRIA, AND IN HIS VIEW SERVES PURPOSE OF BREAKING DOWN "OUTER DEFENSES" OF REGIME.

13. IN OUR VIEW, THESE SIGNS IMGIDATE THAT THE AL-ASSAD REGIME IS FACING CHALLENGES FROM SOME DETERMINED OPPONENTS, AND THAT THOSE INVOLVED MAY WELL INCLUDE BOTH ALAWITES AND NON-ALAWITES. THE STRUGGLE SEEMS TO BE UNFOLDING ALONG TRADITIONAL SYRIAN LINES, WITH CONTROL OF THE MILITARY THE GOAL AND WITH GRIEVANCES ACCUMULATED OVER THE PAST YEAR-AND-A-HALF -- INCLUDING LEBANON, SECTARIANISM, ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, CORRUPTION AND INTERNAL SECURITY -- AROUSING THE EMOTIONS OF MANY IN THE POPULACE AND THUS PROVIDING A CONTEXT FOR EITHER FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION OR A RENEWED EFFORT BY AL-ASSAD TO BOLSTER THE FOUNDATIONS OF HIS REGIME. WHILE HIS OUTER DEFENSES, TO USE SHOUFFI'S TERM, MAY HAVE BEEN PIERCED BY RECENT DIFFICULTIES, HIS CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF POWER AND SUPPORT STILL PROVIDE HIM WITH THE NECESSARY TIME TO MAKE USE OF RECENT INFUSIONS OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND TO MEND FINCES WITH THOSE IN THE ALAWITE COMMUNITY WHO ARE DISCONTENT WITH HIS LEADERSHIP. IN ADDITION, DESPITE REFERENCE TO FACTIONS IN THE MILITARY -- A NORMAL STATE OF AFFAIRS IN SYRIA -- WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT AL-ASSAD HAS LOST CONTROL OF THE MILITARY AND SECURITY APPARATUS. AS LEADER OF THE PARAMOUNT COALITION IN SYRIA, WITH WIDESPREAD SUPPORT IN ARMY AND GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS, AS WELL AS POPULACE AT LARGE, HE REMAINS SECRET

PAGE 09 STATE 148753

DETERMINED TO OVERCOME DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING HIS REGIME AND DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY WILL NOT AFFECT HIS ABILITY TO SPEAK FOR SYRIA DURING FORTHCOMING EFFORTS TO MOVE THE PEACE PROCESS FORWARD. PELLETREAU UNQTE VANCE

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